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TREFETHEN

The Family and The Landing

by

Jessie B. Trefethen

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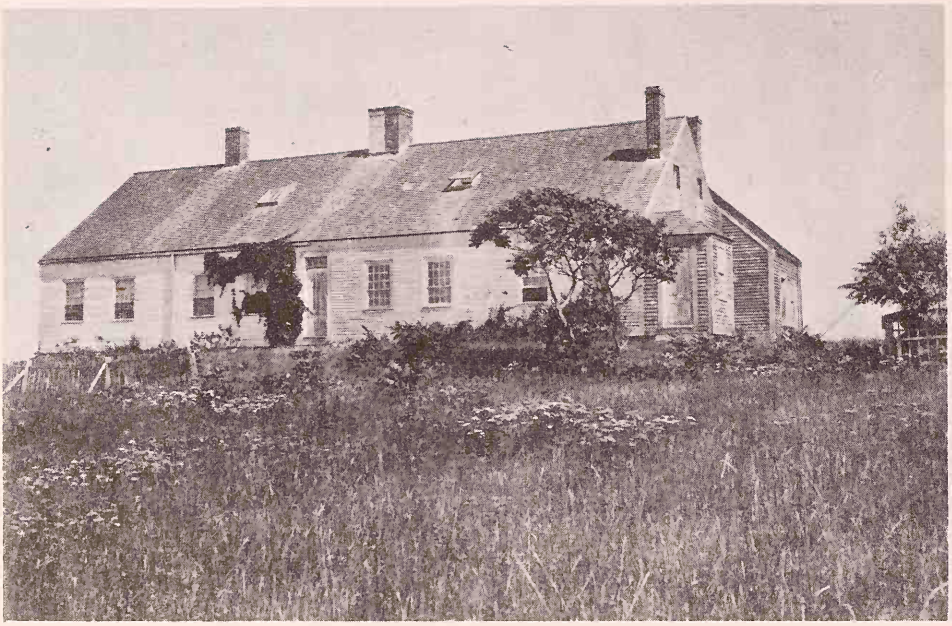
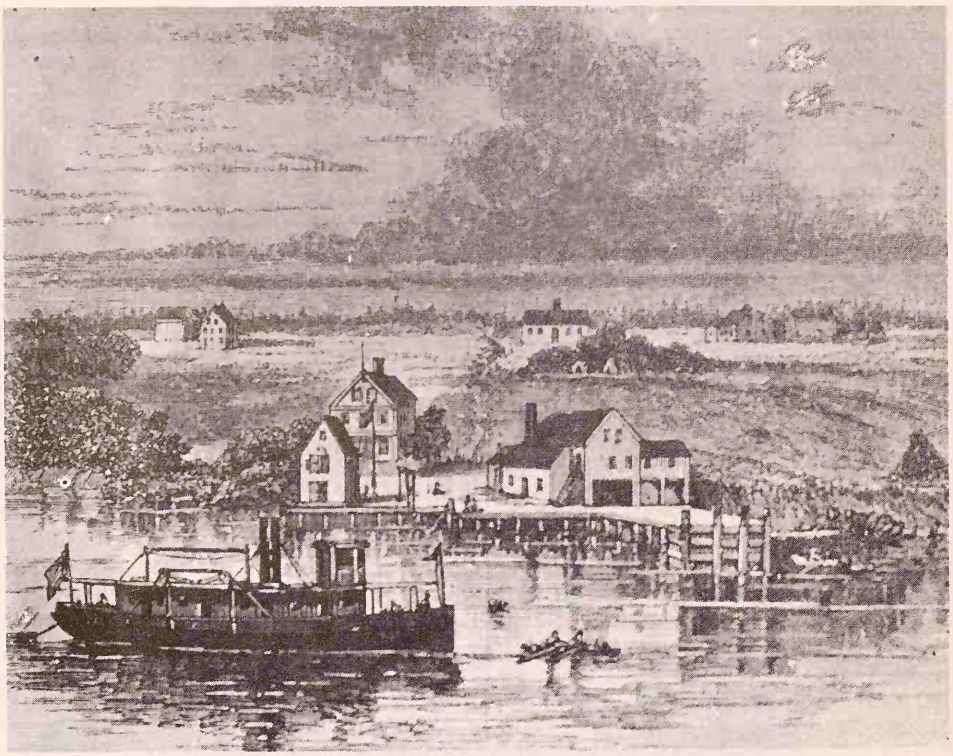
"The Influence" - Monhegan Island, Maine
Built by Henry Trefethen, 1826
COURTESY OF MRS. VARNUM

Old Grandfather's Clock
Made by Henry Trefethen of New Castle, N. H. Mentioned in the will of 1797. *This clock was later at Monhegan, House Island and Peaks Island.*



Cape Cod House, House Island
House of Henry Trefethen, House Island, 1823-1880.



Old Lithograph of Trefethen's Landing
Made about 1860.

TREFETHEN

THE FAMILY AND THE LANDING

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HOUSE OF FALMOUTH, INC.

Portland, Maine

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Jessie B. Trefethen
August 3, 1961

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Dedicated to the Memory
of my Mother and Father,
Elizabeth Mank Trefethen and William
Henry Trefethen, whose devotion
to things past made it possible
for me to put together the
bits and pieces

J. B. T.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express appreciation for the notes given me by Mrs. Emma Steuerwald formerly of Dover, N. H. (d. 1956). She had built them up out of 15 years of research among New Hampshire's Historical Documents.

To Robert F. Skillings, for opening to me the files of the Trefethen Evergreen Improvement Association.

To Mrs. Lois Kent, for her care and patience in typing.

To friends and relatives who gave me encouragement to write this book, and for their photographic films and plates.

JESSIE B. TREFETHEN

INTRODUCTION

"Not to know what happened before you were born is to be always a child." This quotation, by an author to me unknown, was in an old and tattered spelling book at the Peaks Island School. I rated it in importance with, "Breathes there a man with soul so dead, who never to himself hath said, 'This is my own, my native land'," in the same book. I am sure that they became a part of my life; and after a welter of experience, living on "foreign" soil, I came back saying, "This is my own, may native land." Perhaps this effort through trial and error, reaching back to a remote time through records, letters, and tradition, may encourage others to make a similar effort to find themselves. I am filing genealogical records with the Maine Historical Society.

—Jessie B. Trefethen.

Trefethen
Homestead, 1960

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Chapter I

THE NAME

TREFETHEN is a Celtic or Gaelic name. According to Lady Gregory, a "trefeth" in Gaelic is a fourth part of a township. "Then" and "than" are authentic endings: but "thern," "thren" and "theren" are some of the misspelled endings, applied by people who are afflicted with bad ears or careless speech. In fact until the time of Noah Webster, no one in this country thought much about correct spelling; and Judge Charles Jenney of Boston, who was interested in the family name and wrote "The Fortunate Island of Monhegan," said that he found fourteen different spellings of the name in old deeds and documents.

In Gilbert's Glossary of Old British Names," the name has been traced back to Trevarthian, which is a version of the name as old as King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. Gilbert says, "In ancient times, it was one of the most honored names in Cornwall."

The name is found in Wales as Trevethan. There is a little hamlet near Monmouth by that name. In the Jersey Isles it appears as Tregavethen, in Cornwall as Trefethen, Trefethan or even Trevethy. It is certainly older than any English name in England today, for it was there before the Roman and

Anglo-Saxon Conquests. The Normans were upstarts by comparison. There is a Druid Cromlech, or circle of stones, near Truro in southern England, called "Trethevy," perhaps an ancient version of the same name. Julius Caesar found the Celts unconquerable. Even today the English have not done much better. A Cornishman may still speak of "going up to England."

The true Trefethen thinks and acts independently; and with the taste and imagination of his forebears seems to have sought out places by the edge of the sea, preferably where the coast is rugged. Usually he has bought islands, or parts of islands. The story goes this way. In the area of Portsmouth, N. H., and Kittery, Maine, there are records of purchases by Trefethens on Great Island, Fernald's Island and Seavey's Island; and in fact Seavey's Island, now the Portsmouth Navy Yard, used to be called Trefethen's Island. Then there is Monhegan Island off the coast from Port Clyde and Boothbay Harbor, that was owned by the fourth known Henry Trefethen in this country in the 18th century; and House Island and Peaks Island, in Casco Bay. There is nothing unusual about a family acquiring a piece of island—property; but when it happens repeatedly in one family, over a period of almost 300 years, one may pause and ask "why"?

There was undoubtedly a great desire to own land, and to the Britisher land has always meant wealth. But land on or near the sea was of prime importance to a Trefethen. Tall masts, a stanch

boat and spreading sails, the whole dome of sky over head and an endless expanse of ocean were part of the picture, but not all of it.

The Trefethens were competent seamen with a canny sense of winds, tides, and weathers, but they were also boat builders and they built substantial homes. They had, and still have, great skill of hand, and sometimes they have been cabinet-makers and wood-carvers, besides tilling the soil. Deep blue eyes, a pleasant voice, a quiet sense of humor, and the ability to say just what they mean have long been characteristic of them.

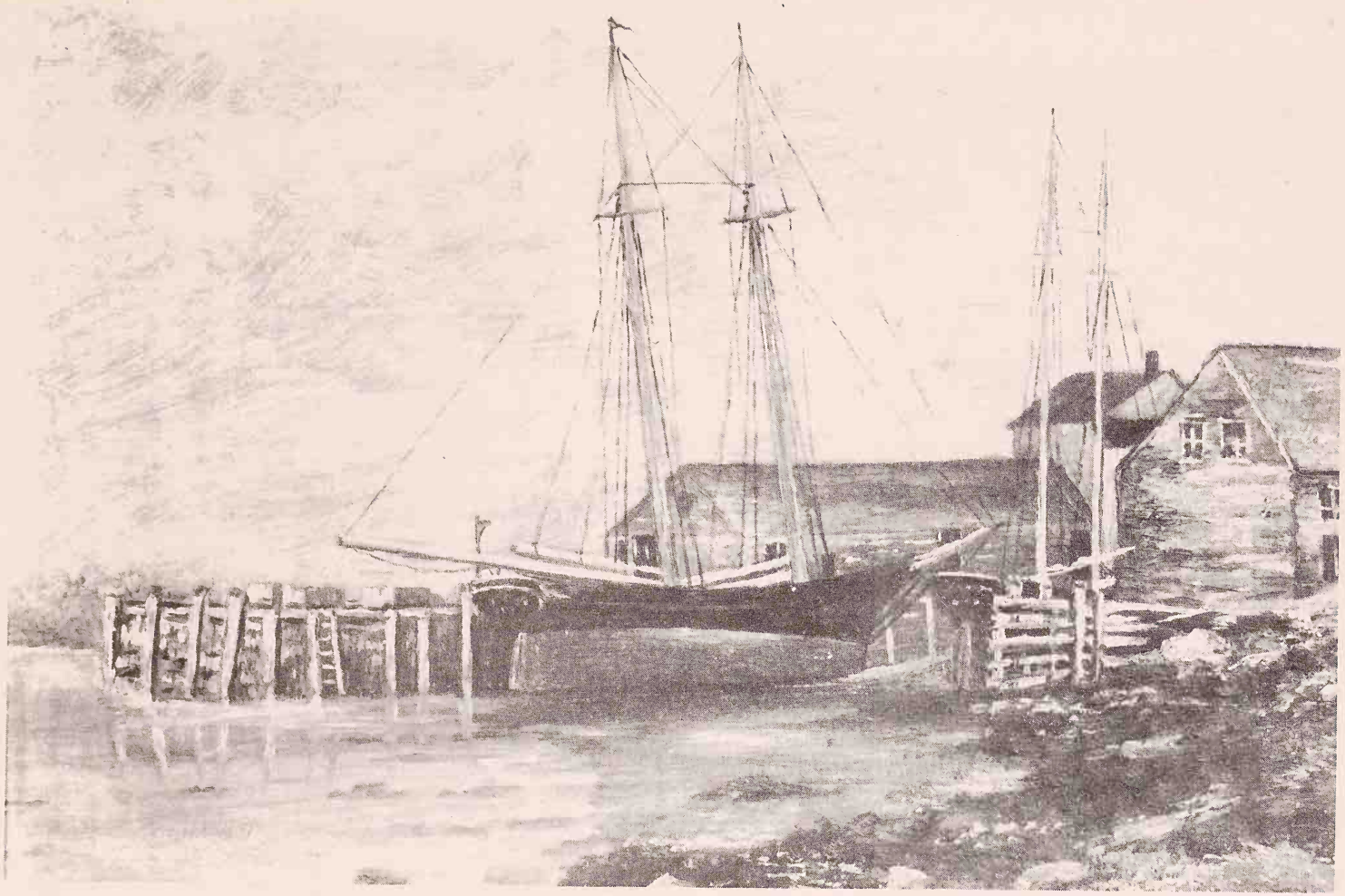
Chapter II

EARLY RECORDS

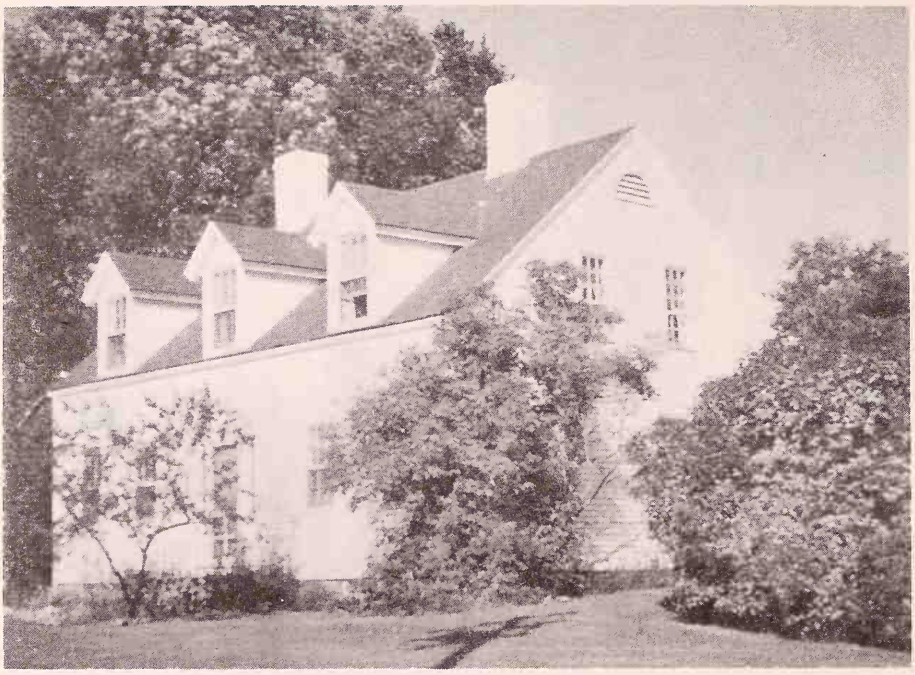
HENRY Trefethen, a shipwright, was living in New Castle, New Hampshire, as early as 1678. He was the first of that name on record in the Colonies. At that time the name is spelled Trevethan, or Treventhan. From 1678 to 1699 Henry's name appears on records as an appraiser and a witness of wills. He also served on the Grand Jury. His wife, Joanna, was living up to 1708. It is difficult, and sometimes impossible, to trace the wife's maiden name, and hers is unknown.

Henry and Joanna had two children, Henry and Foster. Henry married Mary Robinson and they lived in Rye, N. H. Their Genealogy has been written in "The History of the Town of Rye." published in 1905. Their descendants are in that area. Foster, who perhaps was given his mother's maiden name, married Martha Paine, daughter of James and Martha Paine. Their descendants lived around New Castle, N. H., later at Monhegan Island and House Island, and presently at Peaks Island, Maine.

Foster was a ship's carpenter. By 1705 he had bought land and property in New Castle and Portsmouth. He made further purchases in 1723, 1734, 1736 and 1748. These are a matter of record. In



"The Railroad," a schooner used to carry loads of dry fish at House Island.



"The Homestead," built by Henry Trefethen of House Island in 1844 for his two oldest children.

The Valley View House near Trefethen's Landing, on the site where the tennis court now stands. Home and hotel of Captain William S. Trefethen, built in 1852.

1736, he sold land and building to his son, Henry. This property was on Great Island, New Castle. In this transaction, the name is spelled Triferinge, which is possibly the strangest spelling of the name on record.

The will of Foster is dated March 13, 1751. It mentions bequests to his sons John and Foster, and to grandchildren, Thomas, Love, Richard and Mary Toull, heirs of his son James (deceased); his grand daughter, Mary Trefethen, daughter of his late son George; his daughters, Martha and Elizabeth Card; and John Card, husband of Elizabeth, is named executor. John, Elizabeth and Sarah Trundy are mentioned as heirs of his late son Henry. Foster died in 1754, and John Card gave a bond of $500 as executor of the will. Elizabeth and Martha were to receive his "household goods and moveable effects" to be divided equally between them. No inventory was attached. There is an interesting item that reads as follows: "I give my footway before mentioned that leads from my dwelling house to the highway down to my well to all my before mentioned children for a conveniency, to pass and repass to my said well. And likewise I reserve and give unto all my children aforesaid the privilege of a footway along my said dwelling house at the south end of the land I have in this will given to my son-in-law John Card and Elizabeth his wife; for them to transport their wood and other necessities, and not keeping the said way open any longer than when they are immediately using it."

Foster's son Henry, had died in 1745. He went

to the Siege of Louisburg, in Colonel William Pepperell's regiment of 1,565 men recruited from the Kittery area, and 1,290 men from Falmouth, now Portland. Pepperell was made a Lieutenent General, in command of the whole expedition. The English and Colonials lost 130 men, among them Henry Trefethen, for that year is given as the date of his death. Louisburg, called "The Gibralter of America," was considered to be an almost inpregnable fortress, at the southeastern tip of Cape Breton Island. Built by Louis XIV of France like a small Versailles, it was finally battered down by the Colonials, who went prepared with 9,000 cannon balls and 600 bombs. It took 44 days to level the fortress that had been the labor of 25 years. The high cost of this fortress, 3,000,000 livres, was one of the contributing causes of the French Revolution.

Chapter III

HENRY TREFETHEN OF NEW CASTLE

HENRY Trefethen, son of Henry who died at Louisburg, was born about 1734, in New Castle, and died in Dover in 1797. Before 1760 he had married Phebe (last name unknown.) In deeds and other records in New Hampshire Historical Society files there are mentioned numerous transfers of property to him or from him, from 1761 to 1797. He is spoken of variously as a shipwright, a cabinetmaker and a trader.

On October 2, 1777 he negotiated for the purchase of Monhegan and Manana Islands off the Maine Coast, out in the sea eleven or twelve miles from Boothbay Harbor and Port Clyde, from owners by the name of Bickford. He paid the purchase price, three hundred pounds, but the deed was not given until 1790. If he ever lived on Monhegan, there is no record of it. There are 433 acres on Monhegan and 25 acres on Manana, with a little harbor in between.

In the early 1600's Abraham Jennings claimed to have bought the Islands from the Indians, and from that time came this quaint description: "The remarkablest isle, and mountains for landmarks, a round high isle with little Monas (Manana) by its side, betwixt which is a small harbor, where

ships can lie at anchor." Captain George Weymouth seems to have been there in 1605, and to have planted a cross for King James I of England. There they found salmon, lobsters and an abundance of cod. They found the soil to be fertile, and they planted seeds. Sir Ferdinando Gorges seems to have had a claim on the Islands as early as 1623.

One wonders just why Henry Trefethen bought the Islands; for in the 18th century they were a long distance from his home in New Castle, N. H. Did he go back through the woods to see Black Head and White Head, looking so much like the rugged coast of Cornwall? But perhaps the family had long since forgotten what they had left behind in the Old Country. Perhaps he was intrigued by the peace that surrounds the Islands, so far from the mainland. Perhaps the richness of the soil, in parts where it is not bleak and rocky, appealed to him, and all the wealth from the sea. Monhegan and Manana are mountain tops, as are the islands of Casco Bay and all the other islands along the cost, survivals of the time when the mainland extended to the Fishing Banks, and perhaps beyond.

By 1793 Henry, son of Henry and Phebe of New Castle and Kittery, was occupying Monhegan, along with Josiah Sterling and Thomas Horne. Henry had married Jemina Sterling, sister of Josiah. Josiah had married Mary Trefethen, Henry's sister, and Thomas had married Sarah, also Henry's sister. Monhegan had become a family settlement, and they carried on a sort of communal farm life. The

three men were called "Mariners." In 1796 Henry Trefethen, who had moved from New Castle to Dover, had given his son Henry a power of attorney to attend to the Monhegan property, and had deeded to him one half of the Islands.

Henry, the father, died in Dover, N. H., in 1797. His will shows him to have been a man of considerable means. He had let out almost $7,000 at interest to members of his family and friends. His dwelling house at Dover Point was valued at $1,750. Listed in his inventory are 32 acres at Dover Neck, and dwelling thereon, valued at $500; 400 acres of land at Ossipee, N. H., valued at one dollar an acre. Along with other parcels of land, the estate was worth about $12,000, and that was in the eighteenth century when valuations were exceedingly low. Monhegan was not listed in his inventory, but in his will he stipulated that the one half of it yet to be divided was not to be evaluated at more than $1,000.

The list of furnishings attched to the will of Henry of Kittery and Dover is worthy of comment. In "The Best Room", for instance, bedstead, bolster, pillows and curtains, at $30. The curtains would indicate it was a "high poster." A mahogany desk, $20. Ten pairs of blankets, $40. Clock and mahogany case, $60. This is undoubtedly the grandfather's clock made by Henry Trefethen as an heirloom, the case made by him, the works brought from England. Later the clock was at Monhegan, then at House Island, and in 1880, it became the property of Henry Trefethen of Peaks Island. It

is now owned by Leland Trefethen, a grandson of Henry of Peaks Island, and it is in Venice, Florida.

To return to the inventory; a dozen pewter plates are mentioned, four pewter platters, a pewter bason (basin), three more beds with under or trundle beds for small children, a Bible, a hymn book and three other small books. (It would be interesting to know their titles.) Scores of kitchen utensils show that the 18th century home was well supplied. Also are listed 200 bushels of corn, 300 bushels of potatoes (valued at $75), 700 pounds of salt pork, 200 pounds of salt beef and seven barrels of cider, stock and farming utensils, and a sleigh and chaise. At the time he died the cash on hand was $600.

Henry and Phebe had ten children. Listed in his will are John, Henry (b. 1767-d. 1838), Daniel, William, Abraham, James, Mary (b. 1763-d. 1839) who married Josiah Sterling, Eunice, who married Hercules (or Archelaus), Fernald, Sarah who married Thomas Horne, and Phebe who married Thomas Card.

Because Henry was ill, he and Phebe had left their home in Kittery to live with their daughter, Phebe Card, at Dover Point. It was said to be a large white house; and in a corner room, reading and writing were taught, and there girls were taught to knit and sew. Henry died there and was buried in an old graveyard on the eastern side of Dover Point Road. There is a grave stone (now broken) that marks the spot. Two years later Phebe married John Kelley (or Keile) of Dover. She was 62. She died in 1821.

Chapter IV

THE MONHEGAN STORY

WHEN Henry of Monhegan decided to marry again, (Jemima had died in 1805) he built a double house, a grand place called "The Influence." Today it has eleven rooms, and possibly there was a twelfth, a second kitchen on the south side. He deeded the half facing the road to his son George (b. 1800-d. 1871) who married Sarah Thompson (b. 1801-d. 1856.) The deed to that half hangs in the house today, signed "Henry Trefethen"; but documents relating to the era of Trefethen occupation of the Island give the name as Trefethren. In like fashion, Sterling is written as Starling and is so engraved on grave stones. The worst to be done to Thomas Horne's name was to spell it Horn. Everyone from stone cutters to makers of wills and documents spelled as he pleased.

"The Influence" built in 1826 was a mansion in its day, and still may be so regarded; and when Anne Baxter came there as Henry's second wife, she must have felt like a queen. The rooms have mantels, wainscotting and cornices carved by hand. The chimneys were massive, supported by round stone arches in the basement, and there was a fireplace in every room. The big chimneys were taken out in the 1870's. With the fine carving, Henry may also

have made his furniture, but not a stick of it remains. The lumber for the house was brought from the mainland in barges, some say nineteen barges in all. There was a good deal of speculation that the roof might not be adequate, but it has lasted until today. Every inch of the place is precious to its present owners, the William H. Varnums and the R. E. Slaytons of Madison, Wisconsin. Henry was almost 60 when he married again, and Anne bore him several children, among them Joseph, who became the father of Henry Trefethen, Prof. of Mathematics at Colby College, for several years. He had formerly taught at Kent's Hill. Other descendants live in Wilton, Maine.

Anna L., daughter of Abram or Abraham Baxter (b. 1836 - d. 1903) another son by the second marriage, lives in Oberlin, Ohio. Abram or "Baxter" as he was usually called, lived most of his life away from Maine. He has other descendants in California.

"The Influence" as it is still called, faces a little bay made by "Snubby Nose," and it looks out on Manana. Henry and Anne lived on the side facing the water. George's half faced the road. Later, after Henry died in 1838, Anne took her family and went back to her home in Wilton, Maine, and George owned the whole house.

Peggy Palworth wrote the following poem at Monhegan in 1826, and the Varnums use it on their stationery today. It was christened as if it were a ship.

"This house is built on a pleasant spot.
May God bless the owner, and all he's got.

It shall be called The Influence or the Landlady's Delight.
'Twas raised on a Thursday, just before night."

Some of George's children had their business in Portland. His sons, Newell and Waterman Trefethen lived in South Portland, and son George lived at Peaks Island.

The fortunes of Monhegan have been varied. In 1793 Trefethen, Sterling and Horne shared in a deed from Henry of New Castle of a yoke of oxen, nine cows, a bull, fifty-four sheep, farming implements and a house and all buildings on the Islands. They undoubtedly worked together to get what was needed out of the soil. In 1804, they united in paying $1,200 to satisfy a claim on the interest of a mortgage in the Bickford title. (Henry of New Castle had paid the principal back in 1777 and undoubtedly thought he had paid it all.) Maine was made a state in 1820, but Massachusetts claimed Monhegan as a share in its "Public Lands," so in 1822 the brothers-in-law, Trefethen, Sterling and Horne, paid $200 to Massachusetts to make good their own title.

Josiah Sterling who had fought in the Revolution died at Monhegan in 1832 and was buried there. His wife, Mary Trefethen, died in 1839. The Hornes moved to Edgecombe, Maine, before 1844.

New families came to Monhegan, but undoubtedly today there are traces of Trefethen, Sterling and Horne blood in some of the present inhabitants. The Island Inn is built around the old Sterling house, which may be one of the build-

ings that Henry of New Castle deeded in 1793. In 1829 Henry sold his old house (not "The Influence") to his friend, William Studley, and that too was one of the older places.

In a cove facing Manana were Henry Trefethen's shipyards, where he carried on his boat building business, a trade blended with the artistry that was characteristic of his skilled and sea-loving forebears. His great-grandson, William Henry, as a boy, used to visit at "The Influence." He remembered the portico at the front facing the cove. He described columns (Doric?), holding up a balcony with a handrail on top. A door opened from the upper hall, and Henry could walk out from the second floor and look down upon the shipyards, with its backdrop of the cliffs of Manana; or he could go to the roof, and from the cupola look out over the seascape to the mountains on the dim shore, or out to the broad Atlantic on every side. His domain was Monhegan and the whole expanse of Ocean. Today fishing boats are anchored in the little bay, and lobster pots are piled high along the shore. No trace of the shipyards remains. The balcony and cupola were removed a long time ago.

Chapter V

HENRY TREFETHEN OF HOUSE ISLAND

HENRY Trefethen, the oldest son of Henry and Jemina Sterling Trefethen of Monhegan Island, was born about 1797. His wife, Mary Thompson of Friendship, born 1795, was a daughter of Lieutenant James Thompson. He had fought in the American Revolution, and according to tradition he was at the Boston Tea Party. The Thompsons came to Friendship from the Boston area.

The first child of Henry and Mary was Harriet N., born at Monhegan in 1821. In 1823 they left Monhegan and came to House Island, in Portland Harbor, to live in a long rambling Cape Cod house built about 1800. It was divided crosswise through the middle, and they lived in the south end. In the North end lived John Sterling, son of Mary Trefethen Sterling and Josiah Sterling of Monhegan; so Henry and John were first cousins. John had come to House Island in 1822, and had bought half of it. Henry bought the other half the next year. He was established in the dry fish business, and told by his father "to make a living." John and Henry each carried on a separate business.

The second child of Henry and Mary was William S., born at House Island in 1823, as were all the other children. William was named for William

Studley, Henry's best friend, whom he had left behind at Monhegan. Jane H. was born in 1825, George in 1830, Charles E. in 1832, Henry in 1833, and Elizabeth in 1836.

Henry built his business on a reputation for absolute honesty. It is a family tradition that he brought $20,000 from Boston to Portland in a fishing vessel, leaky no doubt, that way being considered safer than a trip by mainland. He gave no bond, only his word that he would deliver it safely. That is how the first bank in Portland was started, said to be the First Portland National Bank.

Henry made his own kitchen chairs of simple Windsor design, and painted them yellow. As he grew more prosperous, mahogany furniture of Empire design came to his island home.

The business grew until "fish flakes"—covered the Island, and when the grass grew to the top of the flakes, the sheep were turned in there to crop it down. It was strictly a process of sun-drying, and fleets of fishing vessels went into northern waters, to the Gulf of Saint Lawrence and the Grand Banks, and brought back their loads. An old photograph shows the Island covered with fish flakes. It is said that in one season as much as 25,000 quintals of fish would be drying there, and a quintal is equivalent to 112 pounds.

The early fortunes of Portland were bound up in the dry fish business. The Plymouth Colony had kept itself alive largely by fishing in the Gulf of Maine. The waters abound to this day with all manner of sea foods, and Massachusetts continues

to come in and take its share. Undoubtedly the Monhegan Colony lived partly out of the sea, but to a greater extent than his forebears and neighbors, Henry Trefethen made a big business out of it at House Island.

There is an oil painting at House Island by G. M. Hathaway (6 x 8 inches) done like a miniature, that may have been painted from an earlier photograph. It shows the Island in its most prosperous era, with the old white Cape Cod House seen from the rear, a smaller and later house painted yellow partly cutting off the view. Wharves rim the edge of the island, and there are numerous big grey fish houses. There is a well-sweep, and masts of vessels are shown at wharves on the far side of the Island facing Portland. Fort Scammel, built at the beginning of the Civil War, replaced an old block-house built in 1808-'09, and it shows at the far left. The painting is done meticulously in blue, grey, faint greens and yellows. There is a schooner in the foreground with the crew carefully delineated. As a painting it has no artistic value. It shows the taste of the times, and that was just a step earlier than the vogue for hand-colored photographs. As a historical record, however, it is invaluable. About 1890, Hathaway had a studio at or near the end of Jones' Landing, Peaks Island; and from there he could look across to House Island, and see just what he painted. His paintings of White Head, Diamond Cove, and points in between, undoubtedly done from photographs, were hung in many homes, and he acquired a lot of local fame. The painting

of House Island was in the home of Mrs. Emily Trefethen Howe in Grinnell, Iowa, for many years. It is now in the Trefethen Homestead, Peaks Island.

The home at House Island was never locked. It was kept as a sort of "open house," in case people were ship-wrecked or otherwise in dire need. Once an Indian woman was found to have had a baby during the night on the kitchen floor. With her family she had sought shelter there. The next day she picked up her baby and they left. The tradition of unlocked doors and windows came down through the family almost to present times. In the pioneer world people were presumably honest, and no one intruded except when in need. They simply respected other people's homes, beaches, woodland, and in general "rights." Anything else was unthinkable.

There are pictures of Henry and Mary (affectionately called "Polly") taken at the time of their 50th wedding anniversary. He looks very grim, as if he wanted least of anything in the world, to sit for his picture. His mouth is set in a hard line, and a lock of hair stands up in pugnacious fashion. She, with a pleasant smile, looks as if she were habitually aimable, and that was her reputation. She wears the gold beads with a gold cross given her by her children for her anniversary. It is said that on Sundays she dressed in black silk, to be rowed across to Peaks Island for church service. They were Universalists. There is a tradition that church services were held at House Island earlier, before 1860, when the Methodist Church was built, and

there may even have been a school of sorts before the "Old School House" was built at Peaks Island, in 1832.

Henry and Polly both died in 1880 and were buried in the little Trefethen burial ground at Peaks Island, that Henry had set aside for the purpose about 1845. It lies on the northwest side of Oak Lawn, on a rise of ground that looks down into Casco Bay. Their remains were later removed to the Pond Grove Cemetery in the middle of the Island, though the family plot continues to be used. It contains more land than is enclosed by the white picket fence, and there are graves outside. Four of them are of sailors of unknown names who were lost in a shipwreck, possibly a hundred years ago. There is a right-of-way across a little ravine entered from Island Avenue, although vandals destroyed the rustic foot bridge a few years ago.

Besides the property and business at House Island and a considerable slice of Peaks Island, Henry Trefethen owned shares in brigs, barks, schooners and sloops. Some of them bore picturesque names such as "The Twilight," "The Good Templar" and "The Hyperion."

By 1886 or '87 the House Island property had begun to crumble. The wharves and fish houses were falling to decay. A hermit called "Old Norwood" lived in one of the fish houses with three vicious dogs. He was particularly fond of "Rosie" because, as he said, she washed his dishes. In one of the sheds were still great vats of black "pogy oil," stored there to be mixed with paint and used for painting boats.

The old Cape Cod house was swept and bare. The big kitchen had no furniture. Only the great fireplace, paved with square, hand-made bricks, was full of old cooking pots. When the Government bought the Island for a detention depot, the old house was torn down in 1906, and the so-called "Doctor's House" was built on the site. Fish houses were torn down, and brick buildings for a quarantine station took their places. By following the Hathaway painting carefully, and comparing it with areas of old rotten pilings still in existence, the numerous wharves can almost take shape, and also the lobster pound made partly out of a natural rock formation.

Margaret Trefethen Paquette of Chicago, a granddaughter of George Trefethen, has a painting of a sailing vessel called "The Railroad". "The Railroad" was still going up and down through the Bay in the late 1940's. Presumably it was a boat that took loads of dry fish from House Island to Portland and returned with supplies. It was painted at the largest wharf well towards the northern tip of House Island by F. S. Beal, 1904. It is said that the business at House Island was the beginning of the Lord Dry Fish Business in Portland.

With the death of Henry and Mary Trefethen the little Island Empire that Henry Trefethen had built up from 1823 came to an end. By dint of hard work, clear thinking and honest methods he had amassed money. He had bought land, enabled his sons to get established in business, and to live in fine homes. For himself, he seemed to have

asked very little. He lived for his family, and he helped friends and neighbors in need. He never aspired to a grander home than the one he started to live in 1823, without show or fanfare. He was a "rugged individualist"; and in a time when pioneers went west, he chose to keep his family near him by acquiring land across a narrow stretch of water separating House Island from Peaks Island. In 1843 he bought two-ninths of Peaks Island from the Waite Heirs, and the Trefethen Story began to shift to Peaks Island at that time, almost 40 years before Henry's death.

Chapter VI

THE PEAKS ISLAND STORY

PREVIOUS to Henry Trefethen's purchase, John Sterling of House Island had bought the Mansfield house on Peaks Island for his oldest son, Luther. That is the house now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Harry Files. The Streets that were named Luther, Sterling, and Elizabeth came out of land that went with the Sterling property. Elizabeth Street was named for Elizabeth Cudworth, whom Luther had married in 1824.

In 1840 all of Evergreen at the northern end of Peaks Island was purchased for Josiah, one of John Sterling's other sons, an area of about 34 acres. So children of John Sterling were established at both ends of the Island before Henry Trefethen bought the Waite property.

Captain William S. Trefethen (and he was a very competent master of sailing ships) and his wife, Emily Reed Trefethen, lived in the old Col. Waite house when they were first married, one of three or four houses built on the Island before the Revolution. It stood on the site where the Norwood house is today, on what is now Pleasant Avenue. It had a large kitchen with two fireplaces, one for the Waite family and one for the negro slave; and it is a matter of history that only the harsh Maine

climate kept slavery from becoming an institution here. The Waite house must have been old and drafty when William Henry Trefethen was born there in May, 1844. It was already being demolished, and parts of it were being built into the Trefethen Homestead, where eight old windows from the Waite house and perhaps some of its good strong hand-hewn timbers went into the new home. Two kitchens in the Homestead have hand-made doors with double crosses called "Spirit Doors" (to keep out evil demons), and wainscot boards twenty-two inches wide, that may have come out of the Waite house. One of the kitchens has a massive mantel above the fireplace and brick oven. The south kitchen, now the livingroom, lost its mantel in a fire more than 70 years ago, and has a restored mantel. The woodwork in these two rooms looks older than in any other part of the house, in fact they may almost be called "wooden" rooms. And one wonders how much of them might have come out of the Waite house.

Henry Trefethen of House Island built the Homestead as a double house for his two oldest children, Harriet N. who married Robert Skillings, and William S. who had married Emily Reed. It is a Cape Cod house, built like the central part of the old home at House Island. When Henry came to look it over, he said he could not see the house behind the mountains of shavings. The lumber was hand-hewn, and shaved on the spot, and undoubtedly the bricks for six fireplaces and the brick arches supporting them in the basement, as well as

the bricks of the two big chimneys, were made right there. It was built with a living room either side of the front hall, two kitchens, and two sheds at the back, used as summer kitchens. The front hall* was a gem, with a little stairway, upright white banisters and a mahogany newel post and hand rail. The stairway turned at a square landing. The hall was papered in a brick design, with dogs chained at intervals to the bricks. Floor and stairs were painted light grey, with dabs of black paint to give a marbled effect. William Henry was brought here to live when he was six months old, in November, 1844.

William S. and Robert made the wood work for the two "front rooms", as they were called. Each apartment had two fireplaces downstairs and one upstairs. William S. and Emily lived in the south side of the Homestead for eight years, and then they went to the Montreal House, built in 1852 near Trefethen's Landing, on the site where the tennis court now stands. Robert and Harriet lived in the north side for 8 years, then lived in the south side for 12 years, when they moved to Oak Cottage which they built about 1865. Afterwards the Homestead was rented to various people. At one time it became the parsonage. Shortly after William Henry, son of William S. and Emily, was married to Elizabeth Mank, they came to the Homestead about 1870, and lived there for the rest of their lives. For a few years it was the only dwelling between Bay and Ocean.

William S. bought the first coal that came to the

* **Removed about 50 years ago.**

Island. He could not find a way to burn it in the fireplaces, for grates were unknown at the Island; and so he used it to bed in the first pier of Trefethen's Landing. For many years afterward the coal continued to work its way up through the sand.

The Landing in its first years may have been almost as old as the Homestead. An early lithograph of about 1860 shows it to have been a short landing; and leading from it up the hill was no street, only a crooked cow path. Part way up the hill were two tents, possibly the ones that Rogers and Boyd pitched. They seem to have been the first campers on Trefethen property, and later they built their cottages on the campsites. The steamboat, "The Blue Light", is shown near the Landing, when United States fish commissioners were inspecting fishing industries along the entire Maine Coast as far as Eastport. Professor Badd who had it in charge made his headquarters at Trefethen's Landing. Note that "The Blue Light" was anchored in the stream. At that time no dredging had been done, and boats could land at the pier only at high tide.

The next authentic record is an oil painting, an "Early American Primitive," by a painter by the name of Thomas Balcom. It shows the side wheeler, "Gazelle," going at full speed towards Trefethen's Landing. The "Gazelle" was built and launched 1863-64, and that helps to date the painting. Crowds of agitated passengers are on the decks, and an eager crowd is on the wharf to greet them. The ladies wear long skirts sweeping the decks, and carry parasols. The gentlemen wear plug hats.

Flags are blowing in the wind, and one can imagine whistles tooting. It is truly a painting in the Romantic Spirit. On the top deck stand rows of wooden sailors, each carrying a pennant. Later the "Gazelle" was built over and re-named "The Forest City."

The early lithograph and the Balcom painting both show the Montreal House surrounded by a white picket fence, which was still there as late as about 1885. The stable is shown at the far right in the Balcom painting. It was the only stable on the Island. Most people had a barn. But Captain Trefethen had the first horse on the Island and a buggy with fringed top, and he took his children and later his grandchildren to ride on Sunday. It was the horse that made it a stable, though he had cows and pigs like the rest of his neighbors. The stable was bought by A. F. Webber in 1912. He turned it into a grocery store, and it is now Webber's Market. The Landing in its decrepit state and the high class market are all that survive from the W. S. Trefethen estate.

The bowling alley shown at the right of the landing in the Balcom painting was later applied to the back of the hotel, when the Montreal House was renamed the Valley View House, and there it became a dormitory for women help, with a long row of spool-beds on one side. Out there were barrels of patch work, bushels of rug rags, fabulous collections of old cards and letters, and damaged pictures that were somewhat marred by water marks and the ravages of time. There was a gigantic "Whatnot" in

one corner filled with treasured knicknacks, and dominating the scene a rare mahogany bureau of Early Empire design that would be a collector's item anywhere. This long low building became known as the "World's Fair," so it must have been put there about the time of the Chicago World's Fair, in 1893. It stood in the Orchard, where soft water-core apples plopped on the roof on summer nights. It was a place fascinating to children, with all its varied treasure-trove; and collectors would revel in it if it were there today. But in the heyday of the hotel, the "World's Fair" was behind the scenes. The showplaces were the double parlors with their glittering hanging lamps of brass and colored glass that were dropped from the high ceilings by chains. The Victorian furniture, upholstered in blue, gold, and dark red plush, gave an air of elegance. A large engraving of the Plowman slowly plodding his weary way was above the mantel in the front parlor, and below it were large wooden spoons crossed and tied with blue ribbon. Their bowls were painted with scenes. The "piece de resistance" was a glass dome covering a little French basket full of tiny waxed flowers, that stood on a small marble-topped table. They were the funeral flowers for little Pliney Allen, the last child born to Emily and William S. Trefethen. He is buried in the Trefethen Cemetery, with a little lamb carved on his grave stone. (d. July 25, 1854)

By 1885 the Valley View House was lengthened to about twice its former size and it was by that time surrounded by a fruit orchard. There were cherry,

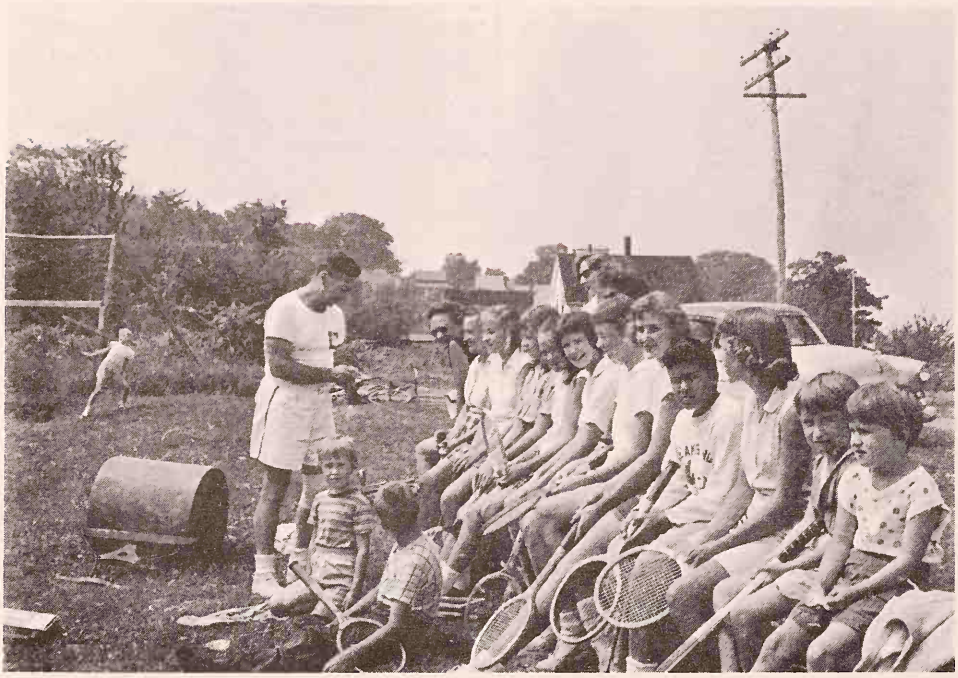
pear, and plum trees on one side of the street and apple trees up to Island Avenue. It was considered to be one of the three or four finest orchards in Maine. Vegetable gardens of cabbage, turnip, and beet plots extended up to the top of the hill, and sheep were pastured in the woodlands. The field between Island Avenue and the Trefethen Shore, recently bought by Samuel Howard, was made into a large plot for cultivated strawberries, and laced through with irrigation ditches. Below the stable, now Webber's store, were gardens of raspberries and red and white currants. There was a large row of crab apple trees along the street opposite the hotel, and under them were tables for picknickers. Clambakes were prepared at the Beach, where clams, lobsters, potatoes, corn, and eggs were baked in rock stoves banked with sea weed; and everything tasted of smoke.

In the 80's and 90's there were bath houses along the shore, for no one paraded in a bathing suit. Women wore flannel suits, heavily trimmed with braid. The sleeves came to the wrists, the skirts were below the knee; and when the suits were wet they dragged heavily around the ankles. Black stockings completed the outfit. Those who braved the cold water of Casco Bay beat a hasty retreat from bath house to water, and a hasty retreat back to the bath house. There was no sun bathing. Sunlight on the body was considered dangerous. Even babies wore sun bonnets on the sands. Women played croquet, and that was considered to be a ladylike game. In the 80's the costume considered

Trefethen's Landing showing Club House of Trefethen Evergreen Improvement Association at its head.

Trefethen's Landing after storm of 1945

Trefethen's Landing in November 1959.
after the Northeast Blizzard.



Tennis Court, 1959

best was a gingham "Mother Hubbard" that touched the ground, with a wide gingham ruffle swishing around the feet. By the 90's skirts were still ground length, and large sun hats were tied under the chin with organdie bows. People of leisure were emerging into out-of-door life, but hesitantly and with many reservations.

Captain William S. Trefethen opened up his property by giving to the City of Portland seven acres for roads. Of these Trefethen Avenue is the longest, running from the head of Trefethen's Landing up the hill to a corner where the street takes a left hand turn by the Mortensen Cottage. Then the street goes on through the woods to the end as Prince Avenue.

He and Mr. William S. Jones were responsible for laying out Island Avenue. Mr. Jones built a hotel, The Union House, and Jones' Landing (1875), still used for a ferry landing. There was strong opposition to widening and grading Island Avenue, and one old settler said that two teams of oxen would never pass each other on any Island road. Captain Trefethen planted the elm trees that border Island Avenue. So the cow paths and oxen paths became roads, and eventually city streets. They are now less picturesque, but far more useable. Pleasant Avenue was simply a narrow foot path until quite recent times.

Mrs. Emily Trefethen died in 1904, and Captain Trefethen gave a triangle of land on Trefethen Avenue in memory of her, called Reed Park. It lies in front of the John T. Skolfield place. It was

always cared for by the Skolfield family, and now Mrs. Wallace Parsons, a daughter, assumes the responsibility.

Captain Trefethen died in 1907, and the Valley View House was sold. It was burned to the ground the following year. The Landing was sold to the Casco Bay Steamboat Company, and the stable to Arthur F. Webber in 1912.

By 1916, the Orchard was ruined, and people now find it hard to believe that Trefethen Avenue up to Island Avenue was always a mass of blooming cherry, pear and apple trees on both sides of the street, in the springtime.

The children of Emily and William S. Trefethen were Mary Eliza who married Donald Brimmer, William Henry who married Elizabeth Mank, Emily Frances who married Samuel Howe, Elizabeth Jane who married Lafayette Scott and Ella Louise who married William J. Craig. Pliney Allen, the youngest child, died in infancy.

The other members of the Trefethen Family, children of Henry of House Island who lived at Peaks Island were Charles, who built his home about 1860 on Island Avenue, where it takes a sharp turn away from the waterfront: Harriet Trefethen Skillings and her husband, Robert, who built Oak Cottages on Pleasant Avenue in 1865: It was a small farm, and a very picturesque one. The large barn, farm buildings and carriage house, all painted white like the main house, formed a sort of court, open at one end with a well in the center: Henry Trefethen, the youngest brother, who built a two and a half story

house on Island Avenue in 1875. It was recently cut down to a story and a half house, and is now the DeFlumeri house. It had a slate roof and was said to be ratproof. In a bay window at the front was displayed a "Rogers Group," a favorite bit of sculpture of the times. In its day the house had grandeur, and the old grandfather's clock was there that had belonged to Henry Trefethen of New Castle. The "Rogers Group" later turned up in the barn, black with dust and grime. "Sic transit gloria mundi."

Chapter VII

THE LANDING

TREFETHEN'S Landing was in the beginning of the settlement, and remains to this day, its most vital part. Back in 1852, when Captain Trefethen opened the Montreal House, he brought his guests from Portland to the Landing in sailing boats. By the 1870's there were at least fourteen wharves, big and small, rimming the bay side of the Island. Almost every family had its boat landing.

The Landing was then, and still is, the gateway to the settlement. It has been called the longest wharf on the Maine Coast, and its length was necessitated by the fact that the Bay is very shallow in this area, and dredging the channel has gone on from time to time. The middle sections of the Landing have been swept away by northeast gales and ice floes several times, but rebuilding has always taken place. In November of 1945 the floor-planks were taken off by a terrific storm for almost its entire length, out to the waiting room. In November of 1959 in a northeast blizzard, it lost about fifty feet of planks and pilings.

Captain Trefethen owned the Landing up to the time of his death, but he had leased it at stated intervals for many years to the Casco Bay Steamboat Company. His heirs, Emily Trefethen Howe and

William H. Trefethen, sold it outright to the Company.

The name "Trefethen's Landing" or just "Trefethen" is used to designate all property on Peaks Island formerly owned by the family. On the shore front it extends well beyond Oak Lawn, a Skillings development, that came into Henry Trefethen's purchase in 1843 and later went to his daughter, Harriet. It extends to the Back Shore via Sea Shore Avenue, and up over Trefethen Avenue and Prince Avenue.

In the early part of the twentieth century, for about twenty-eight years, "Trefethen, Maine" was a sufficient address. The Post Office was first at Webber's Store in a small building across the street from the Valley View House, on what was then called Trefethen Road. It was removed to the corner store when the stable was converted into Webber's Market. Then rural delivery was established and the Post Office was discontinued.

There is a quaint description of the southern boundary of the Settlement. When Captain John Waite got his full title to the two-ninths of the Island, later acquired by Henry Trefethen, the line ran "from the center of Spar Cove looking to the Second chimney from the north end of the Maine General Hospital" (now the Maine Medical Center), "and the remains of a stone wall can be seen which divided the land." (Gould's History of Peaks and House Island, p. 16.)

Today, standing at the center of Spar Cove, one faces a high wall of evergreen trees, and the Skyline

of Portland is blotted out. As to the stone wall, the stones that marked boundaries and fenced in the cow pastures might be found now in anyone's rock gardens. Who knows?

Chapter VIII

THE TREFETHEN HOMESTEAD

THE Homestead is an interesting place because it contains evidences of successive generations that have lived there. Pieces of furniture of various woods and periods jostle each other and seem to belong together. The livingroom, spoken of previously as "almost a wooden room," contains the mahogany chest from the "World's Fair." Above the mantle of a very wide, high fireplace hangs the Balcom painting of the "Gazelle", making what may well have been her maiden voyage. Great-Grandfather Trefethen's andirons are in the fireplace, and they came from his old home at House Island. Great-grandmother Mary Brackett Reed's fire tongs are used to fish out the wood, and adjust it to a more advantageous position. There used to be real wreck wood for the fireplaces that burned with marvelous blue, green, orange and cerise lights (not chemical) . And it was most colorful where copper bolts had been. As of today wrecks are no longer available, but in the long ago there was always a pile of wreck wood in the wood shed.

In a corner cupboard is a precious collection of old glass, including a battered salt dish of cut glass. It came up with a bolt of cloth out of the wreck of "The Bohemian," that went ashore on Cape Eliza-

beth in 1869. In this room, also hangs a water color of "The Influence" done at Monhegan by the author; and an oil painting of Trefethen's Landing painted by Miss Margaret Schauffler, of Oberlin, Ohio, hangs above the old "Tiger Maple Desk."

In the kitchen, Great-grandmother Reed's bread board and rolling pin are still in use, as are several of the old Windsor chairs made by Great-grandfather Trefethen for his house at House Island. Upstairs each room has one sloping ceiling, and contains one of the ancient windows from the old Waite House, the panes measuring six and one half by nine inches. In one room is a low poster bed with pineapples carved around the posts, and in another room is the painted sleigh bed that went with "The French Set," when it used to be at the Valley View House. The set formerly belonged to Professor F. Nichols Crouch, a composer and teacher of music in Portland. He enjoyed great fame in his lifetime as the author of "Kathleen Mavourneen."

Great-grandmother Reed's old Windsor rocker is in the Study. In it she used to rock Thomas Brackett Reed when he was a baby, and tell him that someday he would be President of the United States. In fact it almost came to pass. He was her grandson. He was Speaker of the House of Representatives in 1889, and for three successive times. Handmade hooked and braided rugs are on the old painted floors, throughout the house. When it was built there was no other dwelling in that particular locality between Bay and Ocean, and it must have looked down upon Trefethen's Landing. Now it

is shut in, in a cosy sort of way, but from the second floor windows one may look up to Portland.

On a winter's night, in the glow of a fireplace fire (and formerly six fireplaces were in use), the family used to say that it was like "The Fire of the Drift Wood," by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. It is a much-lived-in place, and one that has been cared for through the generations.

In 1926 an excavation was made on the south side two or three feet from the house, and the foundation of a cellar wall came to light. It was a well-formed corner of small field stones carefully laid up, and in no way did it bear any resemblance to the massive cellar wall under the Homestead. It was evidently a foundation for a much older dwelling, whether done in the time of the Waites, or earlier by Mitton, or Munjoy, or Palmer, no one knows. There is no record of a house having been built in this area prior to the Homestead in 1844. (See historical notes.)

The charm of the back yard used to consist in treasures from the sea. There was an old panelled cabin from a wreck out there that children used for a playhouse. "Uncle Tom's Cabin" must have been a very special occasion, especially when "Little Eva," dressed in light blue tissue paper expired on the Cross.

The figurehead of the old "Julia Clinch" was there, too, almost Life size. She was carved out of wood, and her long curls and the swirls of her short-waisted Empire gown were represented as being blown back against the prow by a mighty gale.

She was a real treasure; but boys set her adrift one Halloween, and that was the end of "Julia".

In the wood shed were boat models, odds and ends of carved pieces, and a lot of glass balls that used to be on fishing nets. And sometimes free and clear of their nets, they had come dancing in on the tide. There was an assortment of oars, rudders, lanterns, and odd bits of all sorts of treasures from the Deep. A small marine museum could have been developed out of its contents. They were the so-called "valueless" things that people could "borrow," and then forget to return. But if the place has lost its charm in the areas at the rear, it has perhaps gained toward the front of the house. And the passerby, if he thinks about it, knows that the Homestead has the distinction held in common with many old Cape Cod Houses, of seeming to fit the ground, of being somehow an organic part of the land.

Chapter IX

HISTORICAL NOTES

PEAKS Island has been called by several different names. George Cleeves who settled Portland in 1633 called it Pond Island, perhaps for the "Big Pond" that is now the City Dump. Then it was called successively Michael's, Munjoy's, and Palmer's Island, after people who owned it, or claimed to own it. There is no known reason why it should be called "Peaks." It comprises about 720 acres, is the largest island in the upper Bay except Long Island. It came to George Cleeves in the original grant from Sir Ferdinando Gorges in 1632, and Georges had received his grant from the English Crown. Cleeves who came from Plymouth, England, had tried to establish a claim at Spurwink without success, so he went back to England; and for 100 pounds he bought a claim from Gorges to Machigonne. Then Machigonne, or "The Neck," was known as Cleeves Neck, then Falmouth and later Portland, an area of about fifteen hundred acres. Cleeves went to England again in 1643 to secure the *title to his purchase. After the death of Gorges in 1645, he assumed undisputed sway in the whole province of Ligonia, Cape Porpus to Cape

* **p. 81—William Willis, History of Portland, Pub. 1865 by Bailey & Noyes, Portland.**

Elizabeth. Both Saco and Scarborough came into his domain.

Cleeves brought back from England Michael Mitton as a husband for his only child, Elizabeth, and he gave them one third of his holdings. One third went to his friend, Richard Tucker, and he kept one third for himself. Later in his old age he gave his holdings to Michael and Elizabeth.

On May 1, 1650, Cleeves conveyed Peaks Island to Michael Mitton in a 60 year lease. Cleeves spent 36 years, sometimes very stormy years, establishing claims and holding his own in his efforts to colonize. He died about 1666 at a very advanced age. He had not sought refuge in the new world for religious reasons. The settlers of Falmouth were Anglicans, and so they were not entirely acceptable to the Massachusetts Bay Colony. He seemed to have come to establish a fur trading post with the Indians. The years under Cleeves were peaceful. Indian massacres occurred later, and whole settlements were wiped out. Mary Mitton, a daughter of Elizabeth and Michael, had married Thomas Brackett. Thomas was scalped by the Indians; and August 11, 1676, Mary was taken into captivity, and she died within a year. Their two year-old son, Joshua, grew up in New Hampshire, and his sons, Joshua Jr. and Anthony, in 1728, made their way back to Falmouth (now Portland) when they were of age, to establish their claim to Cleeves' and Mitton's lands.

The Waite family had settled on Peaks Island, and after repeated legal battles between the Waites

and the Bracketts, Joshua Jr. and Anthony Brackett were awarded in 1763 by the courts, seven-ninths of Peaks Island. Papers relating to that court decision were in the possession of Mr. James Brackett of Greenwood Garden as late as 1869.

The Waites were allowed to keep two-ninths of the Island, and it is this strip from Bay to Ocean that Henry Trefethen of House Island bought from the Waite heirs, in 1843.

This strip joins the Sterling line on the Evergreen side, and roughly speaking it ran along the Parson's line on the South. But it is not that simple. Settlers, perhaps squatters, by the name of Woodbury lived in a log cabin where the Wallace House, later called the Captain MacIntyre house, now stands. This place is now owned by Mrs. Litchfield. Joshua Woodbury had bought the land from the Waites, but had received no deed. He was old and discouraged and unaccustomed to legal proceedings, and when he realized that he had been cheated out of his savings of a lifetime, he hanged himself. Henry Trefethen, shocked by this tragedy, deeded that part of the land back to the Woodburys without fee.

The controversy over the Waite property dates back to Elizabeth Cleeves Mitton. She survived her husband, and she thought, undoubtedly, that she had a right to deed the Island to John Phillips, whose daughter, Mary, married George Munjoy. So Pond Island, then Michael's Island became "Munjoy's," until their daughter, Mary, married John Palmer, and then it became "Palmer's Island."

The heirs of Mary and John Palmer were Parson Thomas Smith who wrote the famous "Journals", and Captain John Waite who built the pre-revolutionary Waite house in which William Henry Trefethen was born.

The legal hitch was this. Cleeves had conveyed the Island to Michael Mitton in a 60 year lease. Apparently Elizabeth did not have the right to sell, and the Brackett Brothers as Mitton's legitimate heirs claimed the whole thing. They held on tenaciously until they were awarded seven-ninths of it. The Island should really be called Brackett's Island. No other family name would be more appropriate, unless it were Cleeves's Island or Mitton's Island. The Brackett title is one of the oldest in New England, if not in the whole country.

It is an interesting bit of history that Emily Reed Trefethen, wife of William Studley Trefethen, was a direct descendant of George Cleeves and of Michael Mitton. Her mother was Mary Brackett Reed, a granddaughter of Joshua Jr. Emily must have felt that, after almost two hundred years of Waite occupation, the property of her forebears was coming back to her and her husband, which it did in 1880.

Everything contained in this brief historical account seems to have happened only yesterday when viewed in the light of the contents of a shoe box in the bottom of a closet at the Homestead. It contains a grooved stone that may have been attached to a wooden handle with thongs, a stone club and stone gouges, all implements ploughed out of a field on

Trefethen soil. They bear evidence of a very primitive people who lived here some time in a remote past. They came to light in the 1870's, and no one then looked for red ochre to tie them with "The Red Paint People." A large flint was found, and an abundance of arrow heads.

The arrow heads were given to the Portland Society of Natural History by Prince C. Trefethen, who found them. They may have come from Indian settlements. At one time in 1666, 80 canoes full of Indians were assembled on the Peaks Island Shore for the attack on "The Neck", now Portland. They seem to be dated much later than the previously mentioned stone implements.

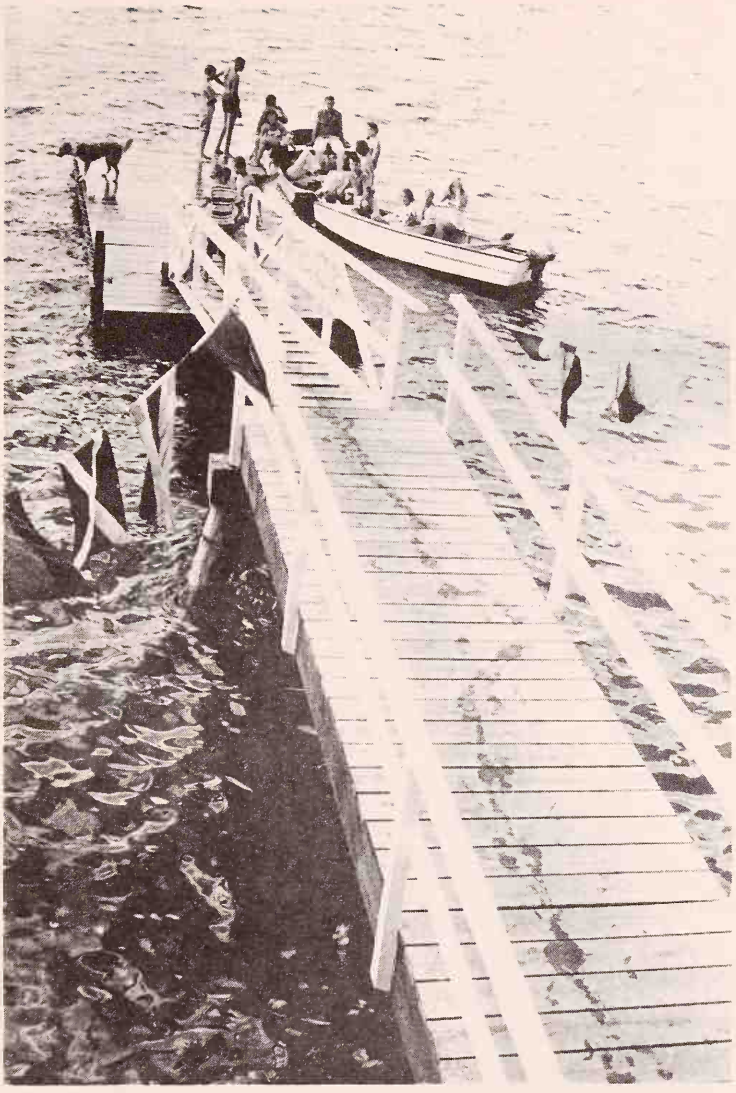
On the Trefethen Shore embedded in many layers of rust was found a cannon ball, evidence perhaps of an early raid on the settlement, or even of the Revolution. There is, however, an old and much larger cannon ball at the Homestead that came from Fort Scammel at House Island.

Chapter X

RECOLLECTIONS AND REMINISCENCES

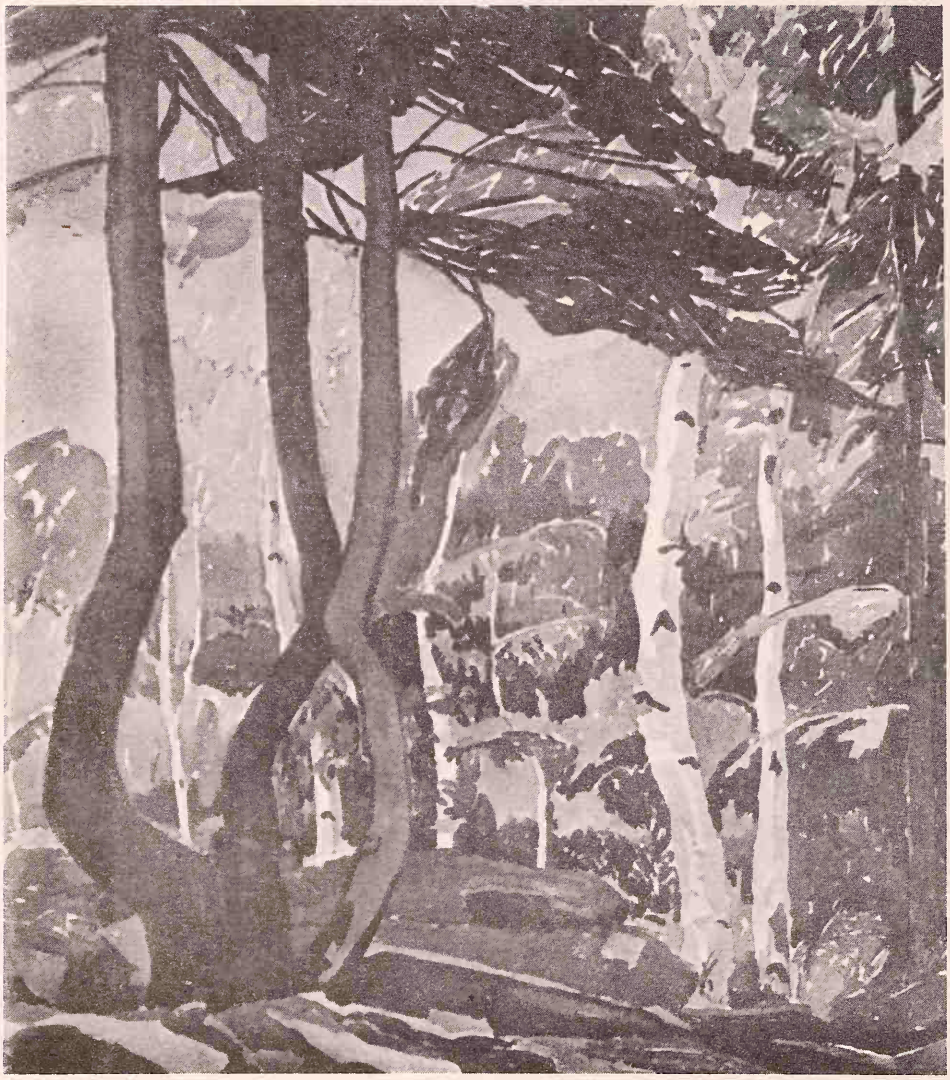
RECOLLECTIONS of life at Peaks Island cover a long period of time. To what extent they are within my own memory, or the memory of my forebears, it is hard to say. For instance, the Observatory at Greenwood Garden at the South End of the Island is vivid in my mind, but I am sure that I never saw it. Neither did I see the bear that broke loose from its cage and landed in a lady's flour barrel, and came out white; nor the cages of monkeys; nor the peacock; nor the Gilbert and Sullivan Operas that were staged in the little summer theatre in Greenwood Garden; nor the Punch and Judy shows. The theatre had a gallery at the rear, partly open to the out-of-doors, where children could sit on hard benches, eat peanuts, and see the show, all for ten cents. Following the era of Opera, plays like "East Lynn" were given there, and Vaudeville.

There were balloon ascensions, and the performer with straw-colored hair and dressed in pink tights, took away the breath of the assembled crowd as she sailed off over their heads, up over Elephant Avenue (now Adams Street) and disappeared into the woodlands. There was the large barrel-vaulted building known as the Skating Rink with an out-of-door roller coaster to the South of it.



Dedication of the raft, 1959

"The Gazelle," going towards Trefethen's Landing
Painted about 1864



The Davies Woods
Before the Hurricanes of 1950 - 1952.
Painted in Water Color by Jessie B. Trefethen, 1940

The Rink later became "The Gem Theatre."

"The Gem" deserved the renown that came to it. Current plays were given there by well-known actors, and actresses, people who would have been acclaimed in Hollywood if they had lived a little later. At times even Shakespearian plays were given there. Dense crowds would pour out of the "Pilgrim", the largest of the Casco Bay Boats, and go along "The Great White Way", lined with candy stalls and a shooting gallery. A man was at the roadside with a table, on which was a little box and a set of earphones. For ten cents the curious could listen to canned music while the crowd surged by. It was the first murmur from the phonograph in this part of Maine.

These were some of the attractions that lured people away from the more sedate Trefethen and Evergreen settlements. At the Valley View House, the Oceanic House, and later at Ye Headland Inn and the Knickerbocker Hotel at Evergreen, entertainments took on a more cultural flavor. There were musicales, and people crowded into the parlors or sat on benches outside. My recollections of such events center around the parlors and porches of the Valley View House, for that was my grandparents' home and hotel. Miss Charlotte Thomas, a famous hostess of Portland, used to come with the celebrities who visited her. She had eight wigs of various colors, and she would wear one or the other to suit her fancy. And to cool her head, she was known to take off a wig and sit on it. Her costume seemed always to have a train slightly twisted so that it fell

from one hip. She was "Aunt Charlotte" to all of us.

The last time Professor Crouch came with Miss Thomas to sing "Kathleen Mavourneen", he was very old and feeble. He was led up to the piano, and he sang in a thin voice like a crack of sound. There was a deep "hush" through the parlors and everyone wept.

Miss Anna Maria Ford Piper, an English woman, came to write. Her novel called "Peaks Island, a Story of Buccaneer Days", was very romantic, in the style of the Brontes. It featured a shipwreck in Spar Cove during a wild storm, with Captain Trefethen rescuing the victims. Only a few copies were ever sold. It came too late; for people already were witnessing melodrama on the stage on the Island Theatre, a different play every week, more thrilling than anything on the printed page.

Mr. Bennett lived at the Valley View House, too. If he had a first name, no one remembers it. His grand idea was to build an Aquarium in what was then known as Aquarium Cove, at the left of St. Anthony's Convent by the Sea. The excavation was made, and a floor of concrete was built. The Aquarium was piped with salt water. A high board fence was built to enclose it, with a walk around the pool bordered with flowers. There was an office furnished with a desk and desk-chair. A bushel basket full of tickets, printed to sell at ten cents each, was brought in, but no tickets were even sold. A seal, an eel and some small fish were brought to the pool, but the seal ate the eel, and then ate up

the little fishes, and died. Children hid their bathing suits in the bushes, and then went to the office where Mr. Bennett invariably invited them to use the pool. It proved to be a good one, piped with sea-water and warmed by the sun. Of course no one ever paid for the privilege. Mr. Bennett, always benign and courteous, stayed around for a while, and then he left the Island and never returned. The scar in the land still remains.

About that time a scheme was formed to put a scenic railway around the Island. Fortunately that never materialized. The idea was that people could sit at their ease and watch the shore line drift by and dream the idle hours away, only three miles from the City of Portland. In a way Peaks Island continues to belong to everybody. Its wood's roads and incomparable rocks and reefs on the Back Shore are there for everyone to enjoy. Captain Trefethen had a broad idea about the rocks on the shore. He never even sold them; for he wanted everyone to use them, and fish from them and enjoy them.

He had a long wagon with two rows of seats facing each other, that was known as "The Democrat." It was drawn by two work-horses, "Tom and Jerry"; and so the long distances were spanned between the hotel and the Amusement Center.

The region known as Evergreen has always had a sort of magic charm. In its early days it was shut off by a fence, and there was a big swinging gate. Inside there had been camping sites; and after the death of Mr. Josiah Sterling, campers bought the land where they had pitched their tents, and built

summer cottages. The land is rocky and rugged, and there is great beauty in its contours and in the rocks. Spruce, fir and pine are native there, and the magnificent pine trees along the shore are ancient, and may be four or five hundred years old. Most of the cottages are old, built in the Victorian Era, and many of them are still trimmed with wooden jig saw "lace". They and the flower gardens that follow along the rocks and hills help to add a lot of charm. "Illumination Night" when everything was trimmed with Japanese lanterns, came year after year, and Evergreen was particularly charming at that time with all its gables and porches trimmed with lanterns, and children coming along the paths, each one carrying a lighted Japanese lantern. Somehow, out of all Peaks Island, Evergreen seems to be the area least changed, or marred by the ravages of time.

Perhaps of all recollections that come to mind, those of my grandmother, Emily Reed Trefethen, stand out most well defined. Her dignity, her wisdom, the way she sat very straight and never leaned back in her chair, her caps of grey lace trimmed with lavender ribbons—all these things set her apart. She read the Bible a great deal, and her simple and beautiful English, right out of the King James' version, went straight to the heart of every matter. In a world that seemed hectic to a child's mind, she was the fountain head of rightness and strength.

I give here a poem that was a favorite of hers, by her niece Harriet Woodbury. It was read frequently

at musicales and other social gatherings, and it was published in "The Poets of Maine".

CASCO BAY

by Harriet Jane Hatch Woodbury

Written at Peaks Island
August 28, 1895

What thronging memories come to me—
Again beside thy shores I stray,
Again I walk through sylvan isles—
That gem thy bosom, Casco Bay.
I see the sky and ocean meet
Beyond the blue and broad expanse.
I see a thousand twinkling rays
O'er thy blue waters dance.

I see the white ships sailing by
Old White Head, monarch of the bay.
I see the white surf leap his sides—
And crown him with its silver spray.
I hear the storm come booming on.
I hear the breakers' sullen roar.
I see the cliffs all white with foam
On every island shore.

I see those rovers of the bay,
The sea gulls shoreward fly,
Seeking the shelter of they coves
Until the storm sweeps by.
Thou art as changeful as a child,
A little wilful child at play,

Yet beautiful in all thy moods—
Oh! Grand Old Casco Bay.

And when from out the ocean bed
The sun comes with his golden trail,
Turning each cliff and sea and shore
And every passing sail,
I cannot help but worship there
At thy great shrine, Oh! Casco Bay.
And like the worshippers of old
I at thy shrine this tribute lay.

When I shall pass the Gates of Pearl
And walk along the streets of gold,
And on my head a crown I wear
And in my hand a harp I hold,
Perhaps I may get weary of
The perfect realm and endless day.
If so, Oh may my spirit walk
On lovely isles in Casco Bay.

Chapter XI

THE TREFETHEN EVERGREEN IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

IN THE first record book kept by the Association there is an entry dated September 7, 1912 that reads as follows:

"At the invitation of the Misses Mabel and Mary Davies, a meeting was called at the Davies Cottage for the purpose of considering the advisability of forming an improvement association which would have for its aim the promotion of the welfare of all sections of Peaks Island." There were nineteen people present. Mr. Simeon Skillings of Oak Cottage was asked to preside. Mr. William H. Simon, manager of Ye Headland Inn, was appointed Secretary. Then followed a discussion of the needs of the Island. Mr. Skillings was named President, Miss Mary Gilman Davies, Vice-President, Miss Almeda Sterling of the Oceanic House, Treasurer. Mr. Charles Sumner Carlton, a singer and teacher of music, was made chairman of the committee on entertainment. A committee appointed to draw up the Constitution and By-Laws was composed of Mr. George H. Briggs, Chairman, Mrs. Emily Trefethen Howe and Miss Mabel Davies. Notices of the next meeting were to be posted at the

Trefethen Post Office in Webber's Store, and at Forest City Landing. It should be noted here that at this time the Association was without a clubhouse, or funds of any description.

On September 14, the second meeting was held at Ye Headland Inn, now Saint Anthony's Convent by the Sea. The welfare of the Island was discussed. Thirty-one members were present to discuss the new Constitution and By-Laws, and vote upon them article by article. The name of the "East End Improvement Association" was adopted. As a result of this meeting a petition was sent to the Postmaster General in Washington, asking him to extend the term of the summer post office, "Trefethen", from the 15th of May to the 15th of October. This was the first forward movement on the part of the Association toward community betterment.

On September 21st a third meeting was held at the Oceanic House, new members were enrolled, and the membership fee was set at twenty-five cents. At this meeting the preservation of the trees was discussed, and the name was changed to the Trefethen Evergreen Improvement Association, by which it has ever since been known.

On October 2nd, twenty members met by invitation at the home of Mrs. Georgia Maggi and Miss Brunette Sterling to consider a plan to provide "helpful" literature for the Island.

On October 5th, Mr. Frederick Whitney raised the question of a club room, and suggested hiring the second floor of Webber's Store for $100 a season. Some gave $5, some $10 and the fund was

quickly raised. The matter of rural mail delivery was discussed. The members voted to retain the Trefethen Post Office, and Mr. John T. Skolfield was asked to prepare the petition.

On October 12th, the water shortage was talked over, and at that time, it was a very serious matter. The water system promoted by Alderman Rounds was showing signs of an exhausting water supply. The water was being pumped from underground lakes below the Island.

Before the fall ended, there were plans for more hydrants, and even to extend a deep water main under Prince Avenue. That plan proved impractical. There were very good wooden sidewalks at that time, and plans were brought forward to improve them. In the light of the present time, perhaps it is significant that "recklessness" of auto drivers concerned the Association members.

In 1913 furnishings were provided for the clubroom, over Webber's Store. The Misses Davies were thanked for their gift of card tables. Vesper services were held on Sunday afternoons at 4:30. Contributions were given to "The Church on the Island." At that time there was only the Brackett Memorial Church. The first Annual Fair was held that summer on Mrs. Maggi's lawn, and it netted $190. In October, after all bills were paid the Association had $407.97 as cash on hand.

In 1914 dancing classes were held at the Hall, and there was an exhibition of Danish Embroideries. That year a loud protest was made to the Press against a certain kind of publicity levelled at Peaks

Island. It had been called "The Coney Island of Maine", and the conservative Trefethen section of the Island was not happy about it.

The second and third Fairs were held in 1914 and 1915 in The Trefethen Orchard, under apple trees that were heavy with fruit. Pictures taken at the time showed booths under the trees, and throngs of people milling around. Notables came, among them Mr. Cyrus Curtis of Ladies' Home Journal fame. Shortly after those fairs, the levels of Island Avenue and Trefethen Avenue were raised causing water sheds; and the orchard was drowned out, and it became the jungle it is today.

The purchase of the Dayburn Casino came in 1917. It had been built for a dance hall, as a business venture by two young men from Boston, but the timing was wrong. With the First World War in progress, there were no young men to dance; and here was a well-made clubhouse in just the right spot, at the head of Trefethen's Landing, "with the best dance floor this side of Boston." On May 28, 1920, Sebago water was brought to the Island solely through the efforts of the Trefethen Evergreen Improvement Association.

The Association has financed its expenditures through annual fairs, dances, plays, entertainments of various kinds and usually an annual cabaret. Its suppers, sometimes for as many as 250 guests at a time, are usually put on by the men of the Association. Perhaps the most notable event was a magnificent concert given by Camilla Ponselle. The tennis court, first dreamed up by the Davies

Sisters, was built out of funds raised in the community, and it is kept up now by funds out of the Davies Estate. Mr. Perrine Rockafellow, twice President of the Association and he himself a tennis champion, has done much to instruct young people in the sport. The raft, built last year out of subscriptions given by friends of the Association, promises to bring the water front back to the sort of activity that made it famous in the era of Captain W. S. Trefethen. The Rev. Richard Davis conducts swimming classes at the beach. Admiral Robert C. Huston, President of the Association for 1960, knew the Island in his boyhood and he looks toward a bright future for the community.

There are a few historical facts that should be noted. Sometimes people speak of the Association carelessly as a social club. It has always been that and a great deal more. To make a thoughtful study of its files, and they have been built up over a period of almost fifty years, is to leave them with a feeling of deep respect and even awe. Some one, sometime, will write a history of the ideals that underlie it, for it is a democratic organization, with perhaps the attendant defects of a democracy. But primarily it is a going concern, it has made its own way, and it never has been in financial difficulty. It has made money to meet its bills. It keeps its club house in repair. It has developed an adequate kitchen that makes possible the preparation of fine suppers. Its presidents have been chosen from all walks of life, among them doctors, architects, teachers, college professors, businessmen, to mention only a few. A

few women have held that office, among them Miss Mary Davies, Mrs. Emma Skillings Briggs (a one-time teacher at the Portland High School) and Mrs. Lawrence Burke. Miss Theresa Cram has been the able Secretary for the past eight years. Mr. Robert F. Skillings and Mr. Charles A. Holden have given generously of their time and experience in matters of business and finance.

A great many people have shared in the building up of the Association. It is impossible to mention them all, but a few stand out for exceptional contributions of time, labor and ideas. Mrs. and Mrs. F. N. Calderwood and the Hustons and Tracys; Mr. and Mrs. William H. Simon and Miss Mary and Miss Mabel Davies; Mrs. Georgia Maggi, Mrs. Emily Trefethen Howe, Miss Anna Mitchell, Miss Adele Rouyon, Mr. and Mrs. Walter G. Brownlee, Mr. and Mrs. John Skolfield, Mrs. Alice Tapley to mention a few; but their names are legion. And the children and young people who grow up helping with fairs and entertainments in time become responsible leaders of the community life. As a rule club activities begin in June and end in September. An annual banquet is held in Portland some time in February.

Most things are taken for granted. Possibly few people have ever given a thought as to why the Association came into being in 1912, in the Davies home. I can still see in my mind's eye the grey-green room, the somnolent light, the trays of neatly sharpened pencils that no one used, the little mahogany "tambour" desk that is now one of the

treasures of the Walker Art Gallery at Bowdoin College. In the harmonious setting, the assembled people were quiet, ready for what was about to take place. The rambling house faced a magnificent seashore, but most of us had come through the quiet woods that had been literally combed and brushed. It was like a fairyland, and people wandered through as if entranced. The little paths followed natural contours and there were small hills topped by trees. The woodland growth was mostly of fir, spruce, and pine, with occasionally a mighty birch. Rock formations of great beauty stood almost like Druid stones where they belonged, but underbrush had been cleared away so that they had a naked look. The Davies Sisters had bought a wild tangle of woodland. They had master-minded the clearing of it, leaving rocks and trees as they were. And they had designed with them and around them, seemingly making design more plausible than nature itself. This was Henry Trefethen property bought by the Misses Davies from his heirs, Harriet Trefethen Skillings and William S. Trefethen. Hitherto, it had been in its wild state. But by the time the Association was formed it had become tamed and like a park, such as no one had ever seen on any island in Casco Bay, and might ever see again. They called it a bird sanctuary. It was that, and more. They planted no flowers, but safeguarded violets, arbutus, ladies' slippers and anemonies in their natural habitat, and carpets of moss sprinkled with white star flowers. If occasionally a long black snake glided across a foot path,

you stood still and perhaps you prayed, and eventually walked on. It was just an incident in the scheme of things, to preserve nature and let it take its course.

The Sisters were generous with their reconditioned forest, and they encouraged people to enter and enjoy it. They may even have envisioned the whole island made clean and perfect. At any rate they saw the crying need of an Association that could do what individuals cannot do. And somehow the idea of an Association was presented that day, and undoubtedly everyone present thought it had been in his own mind a very long time. It was all done so subtly, with no ostentation or seeming to grab and hold the spotlight, that to this day every man who has helped to put on an appetizing club supper, or every woman who has made an apron for the Fair, looks upon it personally, for having had a share in the achievement.

The Davies Sisters wanted no glory. They turned their wealth to good account. Primarily they wanted everyone to share in a project that was for the greatest good of the Island. As it had developed, after they passed away their interesting home was demolished. Hurricanes came and laid waste the trees, tearing them up by the roots and taking huge rocks with them. What is really left of their plans and dreams is to be found embedded in the Tennis Court and the Trefethen Evergreen Improvement Association.

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